

133 peculiarity of these lakes depends on the rock in which they are set. If such lakes lie within eruptive stone, they are as a rule alkali, i. e. they contain and deposit soda (Doroninskoye, Ononakoye, Borgoyakoy Lake). In winter when the climate is dry, soda crystallizes out from the frozen surface of these lakes while strong winds raise up these soda crystals from the ice and deposit them in the immediate and distant environs, thus fostering the mineralization both of the ground water and also of the surface water. In order to extract soda, the soda crystals, which look like a white tinge on the ice, are swept together; thereby 20 to 25 tons of highly concentrated soda lye can be gotten from a hectare of ice surface. In order to foster the crystallization out of the soda, the ice is beaten open so that the lake water comes out under its own pressure through the openings and floods over the surface of the ice. If the lakes lie within Jurassic sediments, then sulphate forms as a rule, especially mirabilite. Deposited under the floor of Selenginskoye Lake is a layer, several meters thick, of sulphate of soda, whose supply is in millions of tons. Alginskoye Lake also belongs in this group. The railroad from Ulan-Ude to Naushki is supposed to lead to the opening up of the important salt deposits in the area of the Gusinoye Lake; the brown coal deposited in the same area is supposed to serve as a basis for this. A large sulphate plant is already in production. At the Gusinoye Lake station a city with more than 10,000 inhabitants has grown from an unimportant village. Coal mines from here supply the railroad. In addition sawmills, brick yards, great dairies, and a fish-canning factory have come into being there. In the fish-canning factory the catch from Gusinoye Lake is processed.

133 137 The steppe regions which appear in southern Transbaykal vary greatly in their economic importance. In the most southerly areas the artemisian steppe extends over a very wide area: it extends not only over the valley areas but also over the mountain slopes and mountains of the mountain ranges, which here are mostly low. In its driest parts the ground is often covered only 40 percent to 50 percent with plant growth, and the height of the grasses scarcely reaches 15 to 20 centimeters. These are poor meadows. Toward the north, through the thickening /218/ of the covering of vegetation and through the increase in the grasses, this type of steppe gradually changes into the artemisian grass steppe, in which the grasses become 35 to 40 centimeters high. These steppes are used as meadows in the spring and in the first half of the summer--as long as the vegetation still hasn't withered away under the summer heat. Both types of steppes have developed on chestnut-colored

133 these hollows, as a rule, the rivers find their origin.

361 Southeast of the Yablonovyy Ridge and its western continuation, the already-mentioned Malkhanskiy Mountain Range, there extends the rather wide valley of the Chikoy and of the Ingoda, which is for the most part settled by Russians. Here the Russian villages lie along the rivers like pearls on a string, while only a few kilometers away there stretch mountain forests which are still uninhabited. The best connections to these areas of settlement are from the railroad stations of Khilok and Mogzon.

The capital of the region, Chita, lies at the point where the Chita River flows into the Ingoda. After the construction of the railroad line, Chita quickly developed from a small town into a large city, which by 1939 already had 102,555 inhabitants, and at present its population probably already exceeds 150,000. The city is built on both sides of the river of the same name, and, lying 660 meters above sea level, the city rises like an amphitheater on two terraces of the land rising toward the north. It lies in a dry, healthy region. Chita constitutes the economic center of the entire region. It is especially known for its fur and leather processing. In addition, there are concentrated in the city important flour mills, saw mills, and [2K] rather large repair shops for locomotives and railroad cars. A few [217] kilometers west of the city lies the Chernovskiye Kopi, one of the most important coal districts in the area. Natural calcinated soda is extracted from the Doroninskoye Lake, which lies further up in the valley of the Ingoda.

133 From Chita the Ingoda breaks through on the southeast first the Cherskiy Mountain Range and then the Daur Mountain Range, and, then again bending in the direction of Lake Baykal, it finally follows the depression between the Daur Mountain Range and the Borshchovochnyy Mountain Range. In this depression the Ingoda unites with the Onon, which comes from the south. These two rivers then form the Shilka, the left source river of the Amur.

Approximately 60 kilometers below the point where the rivers flow together, and at the Nercha which flows into the Shilka from the north, is the city of Nerchinsk (28,000 inhabitants), and 85 kilometers further down lies Sretensk. Here the well-known Nerchinsk steppe island stretches on the left side of the Shilka, principally between the Shilka's two tributaries, the Nercha and Kuenga. /223/ /Sketch Map of Chita Oblast:/ The bulk of this steppe island consists of an almost ideal plain. The rest of the steppe island is gently